

32BJ strongly supports the passage of Senate Bill No. 398, An Act Assisting Students Accepted in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Programs with the Cost of College. This Bill, if passed, would allow for DACA recipients to receive certain types of financial assistance for attending an institution of higher education in the state of Connecticut.

32BJ represents 4,500 members in the state of Connecticut. Our members are school and office cleaners, handypersons, and security officers responsible for maintaining the workplaces and schools for Connecticut residents. 32BJ members come from 64 different countries, speak 28 different languages, and represent a microcosm of immigrants across the country.

Connecticut has taken important steps in the fight to give undocumented youth equal access to higher education. In 2011, Governor Malloy signed a bill into law that allows undocumented high school students, who have attended four years of high school in the State, to access In-state tuition. This made the dream of attending college that much more accessible for undocumented youth in Connecticut. Although students in Connecticut have the right to attend college regardless of their immigration status and have access to in-state tuition, still too many students are unable to benefit from that right due to prohibitive cost barriers of attending a Connecticut State college or university. Because undocumented students are unable to apply for federal financial aid to assist with the cost of college, in-state programs in the State of Connecticut remains a costly endeavor that is out of reach for many students. Without financial aid, In-state tuition is nearly \$120K at UConn and \$82K at a Connecticut State University.

By ensuring students who have been accepted into the federal government's deferred action for childhood arrivals program are able to receive certain types of financial assistance for attending an institution of higher education in this state, Connecticut can provide an important pathway to opportunity for undocumented high school students. The ability to go to college means that young people who have grown up and gone to school in Connecticut will be able to pursue their career aspirations and develop their minds and communities. Moreover, the Connecticut legislature has set a goal for educational equality for minority and low-income students. Currently, Connecticut's achievement gap is the worst amongst 50 states. Because many undocumented students are low-income students of color, ensuring their access to state aid will lower disparities and increase racial and socioeconomic diversity in Connecticut colleges and universities

32BJ knows that making college accessible to DACA recipients means not only giving students access to In-state tuition, it also means helping them with financial assistance so that attending school in Connecticut can be more than just a dream but an affordable reality. The Fiscal Policy Institute has recently estimated that holders of four-year degrees earn, on average, \$25,000 a year more and contribute an additional \$3,900 annually in taxes. At this rate, any investment by the State in supporting accessibility in higher education would pay for itself in just a few years, and then continue to generate additional returns for years to come.